

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT AGENCY
Pierce County, Washington
January 1, 1991 Through December 31, 1992

Schedule Of Findings

1. Law Enforcement Support Agency Officials Should Establish Procedures To Ensure Accountability For Citations

The Law Enforcement Support Agency (LESA) is responsible for the control and issuance of traffic citation books to officers of the Tacoma Police Department and the Pierce County Sheriff's Department. During our audit, we noted the following deficiencies in LESA's procedures and records related to citations:

- a. Officers are issuing books of citations to themselves.
- b. Books are issued out of numerical sequence.
- c. Follow-up procedures designed to ensure that all citations have been accounted for subsequent to issuance by individual officers are not performed regularly.
- d. Records of traffic citations are not audited monthly.

These circumstances do not conform with state legal requirements in the area of traffic citations as set forth in RCW 46.64.010, which states in part:

The chief administrative officer of every such traffic enforcement agency shall be responsible for the issuance of such books and shall maintain a record of every such book and each citation contained therein issued to individual members of the traffic enforcement agency and shall require and retain a receipt for every book so issued.

The chief administrative officer of every traffic enforcement agency shall require the return to him of a copy of every traffic citation issued by an officer under his supervision to an alleged violator of any traffic law or ordinance and of all copies of every traffic citation which has been spoiled or upon which any entry has been made and not issued to an alleged violator.

Every record of traffic citations required in this section shall be audited monthly by the appropriate fiscal officer of the government agency to which the traffic enforcement agency is responsible.

As a result of the weaknesses in LESA's procedures noted above, documentation related to Tacoma Police Department and Pierce County Sheriff citations does not provide a complete, current record of the status of outstanding citations. Without such a record, there is no assurance that the ultimate disposition of all the citations for which LESA bears responsibility is lawful.

These same conditions were cited in Finding 1 of our audit covering the accounting period from January 1, 1988, through December 31, 1990.

According to LESA management, the situation remains unresolved for the following reasons:

- a. Efforts to take corrective action are subject to resource constraints related to staffing and equipment.
- b. The efficiency and effectiveness of the system is dependent on the cooperation of police officers of the City of Tacoma and Pierce County despite the fact that LESA has no official authority over the actions of these officers.

Due to the terms of the interlocal agreement between the City of Tacoma and Pierce County under which LESA operates, a resolution of this issue is likely to require a re-prioritization and joint effort on the part of the three agencies.

We recommend that, in cooperation with the City of Tacoma Police Department and the Pierce County Sheriff's Department, LESA re-evaluate its current processes for controlling and accounting for traffic citations and develop procedures to ensure that controls over citations are adequate. We further recommend that the agency perform regular, monthly audits of citation records in compliance with state law.